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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMCSUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
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UNCLAS LAGOS 000023

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DOE FOR GPERSON, CHAYLOCK

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [EPET](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: EXXON CONTRACTED SUPPLY BOATS ATTACKED

11. (SBU) Summary: In two separate incidents on January 12 armed men boarded oil rig supply vessels contracted to support ExxonMobil's operations near offshore Akwa Ibom State. In one incident crew members were roughed up and personal effects stolen. The attackers were unable to gain access to the crew compartment of the other boat. No Amcits were involved. The ExxonMobil Managing Director described both incidents as criminal in nature and not directed specifically at the company. He has been in contact with the Nigerian Chief of Naval Staff and senior leaders in the state oil company and petroleum ministry, but so far has received no assurances of increased naval presence in the area. Rising violence in Akwa Ibom State could further erode Nigeria's already diminished oil production. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Mark Ward, ExxonMobil's Managing Director in Nigeria, reported on January 13 that two oil rig supply vessels, the Norwegian flagged M/V Viking Forcados and the Nigerian flagged M/V Ombala River, were boarded by armed men arriving in small boats common to the area. Crew members on the Nigerian vessel were roughed up and personal effects stolen. The attackers were not able to gain access to the crew compartment of the Norwegian flagged vessel. No hostages were taken and the vessels were released after the attacks. Both vessels are supplied and operated by contractors supporting Exxon's near offshore operations south of Akwa Ibom State. The M/V Viking Forcados was 5 km offshore; the M/V Ombala River was 45km offshore. Ward said a similar incident occurred last week. No Amcits were involved in the incidents.

13. (SBU) Ward reports the he has been in contact with the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ishaya Ibrahim, to request increased naval presence in the area, but the admiral was non-committal. He has also been in touch with the Minister of State for Energy (Petroleum) Odein Ajumogobia, as well as the heads of the Department of Petroleum Resources and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. Exxon's security chief has been in contact with working level contacts in the Nigerian Police and State Security Service, but Ward reported Exxon has not had high level contact with those organizations. He also said he has not been able to contact the Akwa Ibom State government. The Norwegian government has been notified of the incident. Ward is not requesting USG assistance in contacting the GON at this time.

14. (SBU) On the subject of the GON's response to a possible kidnapping attempt on ExxonMobil staff in Akwa Ibom in early December, Ward said the Nigerian Army's reaction has been

"significant" with numerous additional soldiers stationed at Exxon facilities in Akwa Ibom. He described the Nigerian Navy's response as "limited". The Navy is using boats supplied by Exxon to patrol the rivers near Exxon facilities and housing, but the Navy's own boats in the area are few and in a state of disrepair.

15. (SBU) Comment: Attacks on and offshore of Akwa Ibom appear to be on the rise. Most of our security contacts speculate it is the result of increased JTF pressure on militant groups in Rivers State. Whatever the cause, it comes at time (and oil price level) when the oil industry is not likely to casually accept higher security costs. This could lead to a further erosion of Nigerian oil production. End Comment.
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